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To meet the educational needs of children of limited backgrounds (comprising one-third of the children enrolled in America's fourteen largest school systems) the Great Cities have embarked on a cooperative effort to implement, study, and evaluate an appropriate educational program. In Detroit the project now involves 27 schools, 1250 school personnel and 32 thousand students and their families. Funds are received entirely from the local Board of Education. Families live in low-cost housing or in substandard, overcrowded multiple dwellings. Financial difficulties overwhelm them. Detroit has implemented a four part program to develop academic and social competence in each child in spite of his limited background. Because a change in teacher perception must occur if the child's capacity is to be reached, part one is concerned with teacher-orientation workshops to provide useful knowledge in teaching. Part two involves the improved use of appropriate instructional equipment and materials, the development of materials and methods suitable for the children involved, and more flexible programming to meet individual needs. In part three, additional staff are assigned to schools as reading coordinators, visiting teachers, and school-community agents. Part four concerns the public and private agency involvement and the development of cooperative school-community-home relationship. Data indicates that a larger number of children will leave project schools with increased academic and social competence, will stay in school longer, and will have a greater capacity for financial and political citizenship independence.							
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II

PROGRAM SUMMARY: THE DETROIT

GREAT CITIES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Charles Mitchell, Staff Writer
Great Cities School Improvement Project

In Detroit and other large cities across the nation are concentrated families whose children are severely hampered in their schooling by a complex of community, home and school conditions. Change in the population of the inner cores of most large cities has created areas where the majority of children have extraordinary needs which the public schools are not prepared to meet. These, the children with limited backgrounds, comprise one-third of the 3,200,000 children now enrolled in America's fourteen largest school systems. To meet the educational needs of these children, the Great Cities have embarked on a cooperative effort to implement, study and evaluate the many different facets of an appropriate total educational program.

In Detroit, the Great Cities Project has expanded (beginning September, 1964) from seven to twenty-seven schools. The original project, which involved 420 school personnel and 10,400 students and their families, now involves, or will soon involve, 1,250 school personnel and 32,250 students and their families. The project budget is now composed entirely of Board of Education funds. The total expenditure represents an increase of less than 10% above normal per pupil costs--an average increase, in staff and services, of approximately \$50,000 per school per year.

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The families of the students affected live for the most part in low-cost public housing, or in overcrowded, substandard-multiple dwellings of every type--or in single or two-family homes which are, in reality, transitional. These neighborhoods do not appear to be slums, but their people are often in difficult straits, and the children reflect this in school.

The family of the child with limited background may have many meritable standards and values. Even when its material well-being is limited to basic necessities, the family may be close-knit with love and caring.

But always there is a common denominator: not enough. Not enough income, information, skills to get along successfully; no precedent for success; insufficiencies of many sorts. The child reflects this. He is poorly prepared and motivated for school. School has never seemed important to him; or school success has evaded him, because factors critical to that success are not a part of his life.

The typical city school cannot compensate for the various lacks in the lives of children with limited backgrounds. The typical school does not provide those reinforcements to school learning which, in a stable, middle-income area, are normally provided each child by his home and out-of-school life.

Many of these reinforcements are intangible. They include: an acceptable self-image; knowledge of essentials such as nutrition and health; an implicit sense of identification with a stable family in a stable neighborhood; security and freedom from want, both material and emotional; the self-confidence and motivation to achieve which rub off on the child who is surrounded by things and involved in experiences which are accepted both at home and in school either

as symbols of success of significant achievements. Such positive factors are essential in some form in the growing up of a child. If they are insufficient or lacking, and no compensation is made for them, then the child's ability to learn is impeded or lost.

To develop academic and social competence in each child in spite of limited background, the Detroit Great Cities Project has implemented, and continues to evaluate and modify, a four-part program based upon its five year experimental project in the seven schools. Part one is concerned with teacher orientation and training. Most teachers in inner-city schools bring to their work an experiential background entirely different from that of the families whose children they teach. Appropriate changes in teacher perception must occur to insure reasonably objective reactions to child, family, and neighborhood, and subsequent positive expectations of the child's capacity to achieve. These important changes in perception of teachers occur only as teachers become aware of and are involved in the processes of change which confront children and their families day by day.

The workshop is an effective in-service training tool for providing teachers with useful knowledge to apply in teaching the child with limited background. The Detroit Project uses it to outline the extraordinary needs of this child, with outstanding consultants in child psychology, sociology, urban renewal, immigration, and so forth. But experts only set the scene. The keys to modification of behavior are involvement and strong, flexible, innovative leadership on the part of school administrators and key staff members. Our workshops, and in-service experiences have, therefore, been structured around

local school curriculum problems and have usually involved only a single school staff. Each school staff must look seriously at its unique community, the unique problems of its youth, and its unique strengths and weaknesses as a staff. Then the school staff may search for appropriate curricular and organizational modifications to strengthen its own school situation.

Part two involves the improved use of appropriate instructional equipment and materials and the development of educational materials and methods adapted to the needs of the child with limited background. For instance, one of the difficulties of teaching reading in the primary grades has been to find a primer series which contains words and experiences which the child with limited background can relate to things in his own life. After three years of work, we have "The Jimmy series," the first grade segment (three pre-primers and two primers) of a reading series which will run through the third grade. Produced by a team of Detroit teachers, consultants and writers, its protagonists include Negro and white children, doing things urban children do, using vocabulary words familiar to urban children.

The evaluation of the Jimmy series is developed around questions asked by those interested in the relative merits of such an approach to reading materials. The answers to the questions (hence the substantiation of the practice) are extracted from an exhaustive 69 page evaluation summary prepared by Gertrude Whipple, Assistant Director, Language Education Department, Detroit Public Schools, printed in October, 1963. The Jimmy Series (called City Schools Series in the text below) attained significantly better results with all kinds of urban children in all points of comparison with one of the best of the "Standard Reading Series."

1. What were the results of the experimental and control set-ups in the classrooms using the 3 preprimers?

The study involved classes in varied neighborhoods. Altogether twelve first-grade classes participated, each in a different school. Of the twelve, four consisted of Caucasian pupils, and four of Negro pupils. The four other classes were Mixed.

The series employed as a standard was widely used and is considered one of the best series of its kind on the market. It is referred to here as the Standard Series.

The design of the study was that of a classroom experiment in which the two series, one at a time, were placed in the hands of the pupils. Six classes started with the City Schools preprimers, while six others started with the Standard preprimers. After a certain period, they switched books. The teacher used the series as basic reading material under carefully controlled conditions. Immediately after the children had completed a series, they were given tests on that series, in order to ascertain the progress they had made in learning to read. After both series had been taught, steps were taken to determine their relative interest appeal and the appeal of each book in the series.

With the total group of pupils, (244) the City Schools Reading Program was significantly more effective than the Standard Series in promoting word recognition. Complete mastery of the vocabulary was shown by 68 per cent of the children on the City Schools test as against 50 per cent on the Standard test. In oral reading, though the differences between the averages for the two series were slight, the differences consistently favored the City Schools Series.

With boys, the City Schools Series was much more successful than the Standard Series in promoting verbal ability. In oral reading, the boys made a significantly larger number of perfect scores on the City Schools test than on the Standard test (City Schools, 36; Standard, 23). These findings give promise for the reduction of reading retardation among boys through the use of the City Schools Reading Program. It is a well-known fact that remedial-reading classes include many more boys than girls.

The most striking increase in verbal ability through the use of the City Schools Series is that for the Negro group. Its number of perfect scores on the City Schools word-recognition test (54) is more than twice that on the Standard test (26). This difference is highly significant.

The comments of the teachers show that they experienced a greater sense of accomplishment in using the City Schools Series to promote fluency in language.

2. How does the series vocabulary count compare with other series used widespread--Macmillan, Ginn, Scott, Foresman?

The ratio of running words to different words in the City Schools books exceeds the ratio for both the Scott, Foresman Company and Ginn and Company readers. We have made no comparison with series other than these two.

3. What is the home and library program being used to supplement and sustain the good work this series attempts to do?

Our teachers say that the children experience such pleasure in reading the preprimers that during a free activity period more children go to the reading table than to the "fun" table. Thus it would seem that the preprimers develop an interest in voluntary reading.

4. What were the reactions of white parents to an apparently homeless, and parentless Larry?

The white parents did not comment on this matter. They accepted the preprimers just as they were and made no complaints whatever. In the next book, A Day with Debbie (in press), the children visit in Larry's home and meet his parents.

5. What has the response been to this series by school teachers and parents to inclusion of this series in the elementary school language arts program?

Teachers have clamored for it. The only trouble is that we do not have enough money to supply it to all the teachers who want it.

Evidently the parents are well pleased, or the teachers would not have asked for more of the books. The few parent comments on file are very positive.

6. Has there been any significant change in Negro children's drawings?

The children who participated in the experiment seemed unconscious of race. Some left all the faces white in their drawings. Some colored them black, brown, or red, etc. The Negro and the Caucasian children reacted exactly alike. There was no evidence from the experiment indicating that first-grade children are race conscious.

7. Any significant improvement in reading ability?

The answers given above to question 2 apply also to this question. The experiment showed further that in interest appeal the City Schools Series far exceeds the Standard Series, even though the Standard is one of the best series on the market. The statistical data revealed the high interest value of the City Schools Series in every one of the schools participating in the experiment, those in high and low socio-economic areas, those in Negro, Caucasian, and Mixed areas. The pupils' own reactions during the test added unmistakable evidence. As they read the Standard Series, they showed no overt reactions; as they read the City Schools Series, they chuckled or laughed with pleasure. The reactions of the teachers confirmed these observations.

The City Schools Series was especially popular with the two groups of pupils who experience difficulty in learning to read. One group consists of the boys; the other group, of culturally-deprived children.

Before a child can be taught to read, the teacher must get his attention. As the reading goes forward, the child must receive encouragement to master the words he doesn't know. In both these endeavors, the teacher depends largely upon the appeal of the book. If the child becomes enchanted with the stories, the teacher has no trouble directing attention to them and the child himself tries to discover what the unfamiliar words say. On the other hand, if he is not interested, he is willing to make meaningless substitutions for the unfamiliar words.

Part two also involves modification of organizational patterns within the school for more flexible and efficient programming to meet individual needs. Team teaching is being tried with considerable success in three schools, and has been tried and abandoned temporarily in one school because of limited facilities. Block-time programming, using study units developed by teachers, has been initiated in the two junior high schools. A non-graded primary unit has been in operation in one school for one year and in another for three years, and testing of child progress shows highly satisfactory results. A pre-school program, begun in one school to discover whether early

preparation could offset some of the lacks of the child with limited background, now has "graduates" in the primary grades who are, in most cases, well ahead of peers who had no pre-school experience.

One of the most obvious, and perhaps most successful ways to enrich and expand the experience of the child is to put him on a bus and take him to places he has never seen and perhaps never heard of. Approximately 500 bus trips to industry, business and cultural centers were provided the seven schools in 1963-64 (this figure includes trips as part of summer school programs--GCP Detroit schools operate the year around).

Camping experiences are an expanding activity in the project schools. A camp experience provides an entirely new dimension to a city-oriented life; it offers unique opportunities to teach and learn, especially in the sciences; and it provides an opportunity for teachers and pupils to begin to know and understand each other. Since the teacher is often the only available source of the sort of objective affection and acceptance which the child needs most, a camping experience may be the keystone upon which a child's success in school can be built.

Part three concerns the additional staff assigned to each school, to help classroom teachers and school administrators coordinate home-community, agency, and school resources, and to increase remedial teaching and referral capacity. ^{Reading Coordinators}~~Coaching Teachers~~ (one per school) have enhanced the work of regular teachers with diagnostic and developmental skills in language arts and arithmetic. In addition to working with individuals and small groups of retarded readers and unbudding mathematicians, ^{Reading Coordinators}~~Coaching Teachers~~ are a source of new methods and materials for regular classroom teachers.

Full-time Visiting Teachers (one per school) handle a full casework load and diagnose and refer emotionally disturbed children and their families to appropriate agencies and specialists for help.

The School-Community Agent (one per school) is essentially a social worker trained in community organization. The Agent is responsible for implementing the ideal of the community school, serving children, parents and interested neighbors alike. Agents utilize staff and laymen as instructors and leaders in adult recreation-education programs, and work with school staff to develop a comprehensive enrichment-remedial-recreational summer program. They coordinate the work of community agencies in the school neighborhood, and develop community leadership and reinforcement of school program. Informally, the Agent is an impartial arbiter of school-family issues, the go-between and open forum for neighborhood opinion.

Part four concerns public and private agency involvement and the development of cooperative school-home-community relationships. The success of a community school venture in a culturally disadvantaged area depends in large measure on the concentration of public and private agency resources and personnel on community-school needs. The public school is the most logical facility in which the total community may participate in preparing its children for life. In GCSIP schools, reinforcement of pupil growth much like that found in a middle-income community is made possible through extensive-intensive use of everyone who can, will, or should be involved in school reinforcement programs-- parents, volunteer and paid staff, public and private agencies, college and university students and professors, business concerns, and interested laymen.

In all programs, formal and informal, school-family-community cooperation, keeping the lines of communication and participation open, helps children to save energy for learning, gives parents the positive ability to urge their children to see reasons for learning and to make the most of their years in school.

Clubs and classes have been taught by teachers and by lay persons from the local community and from the total metropolitan area. In addition, many youth from the community have been used as baby-sitters, teacher's aides and assistants for afternoon and evening classes and clubs. Each school has had to organize after-school and evening activities in terms of its own community and the needs of that community. Some schools have emphasized enrichment programs for youth in the afternoon. Others have emphasized adult programs in the evening. We have reached not only typical "PTA" parents but also many of the so-called hard-to-reach parents. All these activities--special personnel and after-school programs--contribute to the functioning of the community school. But they do not of themselves comprise the core of that school. Often an observer can deduce the essentials of a school style, not by observing the successful "in" student, but by observing the number and kind of unsuccessful "out" students--the problem children--and what the school does with them. Just so can an observer assess a "community school" by observing what the school does with children and parents who are not successful and not in the PTA--the alienated child and his "hard-to-reach" parent.

What can be done to change a fortress school in an alien community? Slowly, the community school concept, put into action by administration and staff, chips

away at the indifference to, and tolerance of, the fortress school. Gradually, led by the skills of a detached school-community agent who belongs to the school in the best sense, the school staff interprets the real concerns, perceives the real nature of the school community. It becomes a responsive teaching staff, and hard-to-reach parents and neighbors become a little more accessible and a little more involved.

It took years for the fortress school to alienate its community, to isolate itself from normally sympathetic people. After all, school is for the children's education, and there is a natural relationship, stifled as it might have become, between the parents who want much for their child and the school which can and should give much to the child. But in a community where values from outside--school values--are imposed rather than adapted to fit, where the school is unregenerate and the community is unable to adjust (supposedly, school staff and administration are more adaptable than any given "variant" community), antipathy and disaffection replace the natural cooperation which one can presume should be intrinsic in school-community relations. A wall is built, and real communication, other than at the mandate of the school staff, ceases. Yet what is the concern of the parent? And what is the concern of the school?

Final evaluation of the seven school project is in its windup stage. Indications of overall success are found in the fact that programs with proven effect have been continued and extended to twenty new schools with substantial budget and staff commitments.

All continuing evaluation falls into two broad dimensions. The first may be called "school," and the second, "community." The two are highly inter-related, and must be so appraised. "School" is evaluated in terms of pupil

achievement and social competence, teacher and administrator effectiveness, school organization and, most essentially, curriculum.

With regard to increased school achievement and ability, the project can point to several statistically significant differences in intelligence and achievement. Project High School students tested as 10B's in 1961-62, and retested in June, 1964, showed significant increase in measurable intelligence and achievement as compared with similar control groups tested on the same schedule in high schools without a project program. Testing showed that, as a result of intensive in-service training, additional services and materials, and a curriculum modified to some degree to teach the disadvantaged student, the spread of individual intelligence, both verbal and non-verbal, significantly diminished, during the three-year period, while the Mean IQ moved upward.

Test and School	Number Tested	Means & S.D.'s for Year Tested				T-Value (Test of Mean)	F-Value (Test of Variance)
		1961		1964			
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
<u>Verbal IQ</u>							
Project High School	178	88.8	15.2	91.1	11.3	1.579	1.821**
High School A (low socio-economic)	129	94.4	16.1	95.5	15.1	.549	1.128
High School B (median socio-economic)	301	117.0	14.9	117.3	14.5	.298	1.045
<u>Non-Verbal IQ</u>							
Project High School	178	89.8	17.4	94.0	13.9	2.517*	1.564**
High School A (low socio-economic)	129	97.0	16.1	98.6	15.0	.773	1.156
High School B (median socio-economic)	301	115.6	13.6	116.0	12.9	.355	1.113

*Significant difference ($p < .05$)

**Highly significant differences ($p < .01$)

Similarly, as project evaluation has assessed student achievement and citizenship in the school setting, by means of school records and staff appraisal independent of specific reference to ability (IQ), significant gains can be cited. This facet of evaluation sought only to differentiate between students with a high degree of involvement in project programs (lending library, after-school classes and clubs, summer school, educational trips, and so forth), and those of the same school population with little involvement in these same programs. Careful tabulation and assessment indicates that the high-involvement students showed consistent and measurably higher achievement than those with little or no involvement. One important factor: the high involvement students have not necessarily been the "best" students, in terms of scholarship, deportment, "acceptability." They have rather represented a cross-section of the student population, representing all traits, and not only those which lead to success in the typical school.

The evaluation picture is still incomplete, but these segments, and others, indicate that throughout the original seven school project, measurable positive growth and change in student achievement and citizenship accrues as a result of programs developed to modify the typical school and to teach the disadvantaged child effectively.

"Community" is evaluated, with sociological measurements and research, to determine the nature of change and the ways in which positive change is, or can be, precipitated in the school community. Instruments have been developed to assess attitudes and perceptions on teaching style, and effect of different teaching styles on the school success of the child with limited background.

And project staff is working with the School of Social Work of the University of Michigan in an analysis of family types and neighborhood structure.

In both these areas--administrative-teaching style, and the community school as an effective force in community growth--the approaches used show significant results. Some are measurable. Teacher involvement in after-school programming, classroom preparation, workshops and unified efforts to modify curriculum, revise, replan, add new teaching materials and techniques, all have shown consistent, steady growth in terms of time and effort and participation, with end results in the classroom, and student achievement. Parent and community involvement in school activities has increased measurably, with mutual support evidenced where hostility existed before. Parents have been urged to join the school in the total process of teaching and learning, and they have received some of the skills they may have lacked, and now have, in many cases, what might be described as a profoundly different attitude toward school, and with that, some idea of how important they are to their child's success in school.

What are the "short-term" forecasts for the Great Cities Project in Detroit? We think that a considerably larger number of children and youth will leave project schools with increased academic and social competence, will stay in school longer, will have a greater capacity for financially and politically independent citizenship. It should be stressed that the Detroit Great Cities Project is not unique in premises, or purposes. Individual teachers in Detroit and across the nation strive to help the child with limited background. They work with dedication and enthusiasm, but their efforts are only a stopgap. We cannot hope that they will resolve a dilemma that has grown to such proportions that it can be met only with concerted, total-community effort.